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United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service

Fishery Leaflet 19

Chicago, Ill. * Re-issued May 1945

COOKING CARP

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INTRODUCTION

Some of the older recipes called for special treatment of carp before cooking, for example, soaking the fish in spiced brines for varying periods of time. In few instances, however, are such preliminary treatments necessary. Carp may be cooked in the same manner as the more popular varieties of fishes unless there are definite indications that special methods should be used.

Carp found in the commercial markets usually have a satisfactory flavor and a firm texture irrespective of the season, as most commercial fishermen take precautions to ship good fish. During the hot summer months, however, some carp may have a musty flavor and soft texture; even then, their food value remains although palatability may be somewhat decreased.

CLEANING AND DRESSING CARP

Carp are usually sold whole. To prepare: the fish should be either scaled or fleeced. In the latter method, a knife is inserted under the scales and the scales and the outer layer of skin are chipped off with short strokes of the knife, working forward from the tail of the fish. This method of preparation is relatively easy and well-adapted for preparation of carp in the home kitchen. Most dealers, however, will dress fish upon request.

In pan-dressing a carp for baking, cut off the head and tail. The fins should be removed by cutting into the flesh around the base of the large fins. Grasp the rear part of the fin, give a sudden pull forward and the fin bones and fins will come away. By removing the fins in this way, many of the nuisance-bones are removed. Next, slit the belly and remove the viscera.

To remove the backbone, cut off the head and tail and lay the fish on its side. Hold the knife horizontal and cut with the tip of the blade along both sides of the backbone. Rib bones may be removed in the

same operation, or by a separate cut. The fish should lay open in one piece. Rib bones not cut away with the backbone may be pulled out with pliers, or removed with the knife. The weight of fish prepared by this method is about 2/3 of that of the whole fish. The fish is ready to be folded over a prepared stuffing. Sew the back or truss for baking.

Carp may be filleted. With a sharp knife, cut down through the flesh just behind the head of the scaled (or fleeced) and eviscerated fish. When the knife reaches the backbone, turn the knife flat and cut the flesh along the backbone to the tail. Lift off the entire side of the fish. Turn the fish over and loosen the flesh from the other side in the same manner. The rib bones and fins may be trimmed away, after the fillets have been separated from the skeleton. The weight of fillets is about 40 percent of the weight of the whole fish.

For carp steaks, select a large carp and dress it as for baking. The steaks about 1/2-inch thick are cut crosswise from the fish. The weight of the steaks is about 60 percent of that of the whole fish. Two pounds of dressed carp will make 6 portions.

Pan-Fried Carp

2 lbs. carp, pan-dressed.
2 teaspoons salt.
1/2 cup mulk.
1/2 cup all-purpose flour.
1/2 cup corn meal.
3 tablespoons fat or drippings.

Cut fish into portions for serving. Salt on both sides, and let stand for about 10 minutes. Dip the piecesin milk, drain, and roll in the flour and corn meal mixture. Melt fat in skillet. When fat is hot but not smoking, fry fish for about 10 minutes on each side.

Fried Carp Fillets

2 lbs. carp fillets about 1/4-inch thick.
1/2 cup all-purpose flour.
1/2 cup corn meal.
2 teaspoons salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
3 tablespoons vegetable shortening, or drippings.

Cut fillets in portions for serving. Roll in corn meal, flour, salt and pepper mixture. Melt fat in shallow frying pan and fry fillets on both sides about 20 minutes, or until done. Serve, garnished with lemon and parsley. Serves six.

Broiled Carp Steaks

2 lbs. carp steaks (1/2-inch thick).
3 tablespoons fat or drippings.
1 teaspoon salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
Paprika.

Wipe carp steaks with a damp cloth, and place on rack of broiler pan. Dot top of fish with fat season with salt and pepper, and sprinkle with paprika. Place in a pre-heated broiler, two inches from the heat

and broil for about 15 minutes. Turn steaks over, dot other side of fish with fat, season with salt and pepper, and sprinkle with paprika. Continue broiling for another 15 minutes, or until done.

Special Broiled Carp Fillets

2 lbs. carp fillets.
1 teaspoon salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
3 tablespoons mayonnaise.

Lay fillets skin-side down in a shallow, greased broiler-pan. Sprinkle fish with salt and pepper, and spread tops of fillets with mayonnaise. Place in a pre-heated broiler and broil two inches from the heat for 10 minutes.

Steamed Carp with Tomato Sauce

3 lbs. carp, dressed for baking.
2 teaspoons salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
1 cup water.

Cut dressed fish into portions for serving. Season with salt and pepper, and place on a rack over water in a pan with a tight-fitting cover. Steam for 10 minutes. Serve hot with tomato sauce.

Tomato Sauce

2 cups stewed tomatoes.
1 small onion chopped fine.
1 teaspoon salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
2 tablespoons melted butter or fortified margarine.
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour.

Simmer tomatoes, onion, salt, and pepper together for 10 minutes. Add the tomato mixture slowly to the combined flour and melted butter. Cook until thick, stirring constantly.

Baked Stuffed Carp

3 lbs. carp, dressed for baking
4 slices bacon, salt pork, or fat

Stuffing

4 cups bread crumbs.
3 tablespoons onion, finely chopped.
3/4 cup celery, finely cut (or 1/2 teaspoon celery salt).
6 tablespoons melted butter or fortified margarine.
3/4 teaspoon salt.
1/8 teaspoon pepper.
1 teaspoon sage.

Cook the celery and onion for a few minutes in the butter. Mix the other ingredients and add to butter-mixture.

Wipe dressed fish with damp cloth and salt lightly inside and out. Stuff with dressing and sew or tie with string to retain stuffing. Place in a pre-heated oven and bake at 375° F. for 1 hour.

Joe's Baked Fish

3 lbs. carp, dressed for baking
1/2 cup flour
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
4 slices bacon
1-1/2 cups stock

Wipe dressed fish with damp cloth and cut four 2-inch gashes crosswise on one side of the fish. Dust outside of fish with flour, salt and pepper mixture, and lay fish in shallow baking-pan with gashed side up. Pour stock around fish. Lay bacon across top of fish and bake in a pre-heated oven at 375° F. for 1 hour. When half cooked, baste fish with stock.

Stock

1/2 cup celery stalks and tops, cut fine
1 tablespoon parsley, cut fine
1 small onion, chopped
1 tablespoon green pepper, chopped
3 cups hot water
2 tablespoons bacon fat, or bacon cut in bits
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Simmer above ingredients in a covered utensil for 40 minutes. Strain and use stock with fish.

Gravy

1/2 cup stock
Juices from baking pan
2 tablespoons flour
1 tablespoon fat

Melt fat in shallow pan, and brown flour in fat. Gradually add stock and juices, and cook over heat stirring until thick. The gravy may be poured over fish or eaten with potatoes.

Carp Chowder

1-1/2 lbs. carp, whole dressed fish
2-1/2 cups water
2 large onions, sliced
1 2-inch cube salt pork or bacon, diced
2 cups raw potatoes, cubed
2 tablespoons butter or fortified margarine
2 tablespoons flour
3 cups hot milk
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper

Cut fish in portions for serving and simmer in water for 15 minutes or until fish is tender. Drain, and save stock. Remove skin and bones from fish and flake fish with fork. Saute onions and salt pork until golden brown. In the meantime, boil potatoes separately until tender, and drain. Add to the potatoes the fish, pork, onions, and fat remaining in frying pan. Melt butter, stir in flour; add salt and pepper. Gradually add milk and 2 cups of fish stock. Cook until mixture thickens slightly, stirring constantly. Combine, bring to a boil, and serve hot. Split toasted Boston crackers and serve floating on top of chowder.

Steamed Fresh Carp Roe

Carp roe.
1 cup water.
1-1/2 teaspoon salt.

Add salt to water and place in a pan with roe. Cover and steam for 15 minutes.

Variation: Steam fresh carp roe in stock used for Joe's Baked Fish (p. 4).

Carp Roe with Scrambled Eggs

2 cups steamed carp roe.
2 tablespoons butter or fortified margarine.
1/2 teaspoon salt.
1/8 teaspoon pepper.
4 eggs, beaten well.

Melt butter in skillet, and saute steamed carp roe for 3 to 5 minutes in butter. Add eggs and scramble lightly. Add seasonings, and serve hot.

Variation: Add any one, or a combination of the following: minced onion, diced fresh mushrooms, chopped green pepper, diced raw bacon, ham, or peeled raw tomatoes, cut in sections.

Carp Flakes

The housewife who has always depended upon canned fish for making loaves, puddings, and salads, will find that flakes prepared from cooked carp are satisfactory for this purpose.

Preparation of Cooked Carp Flakes

4 pounds of carp, whole, dressed fish.
1/2 teaspoon salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
1 cup hot water.

Cut fish into pieces for serving, and season each with salt and pepper. Place on rack in a covered pan containing water, and steam for about 10 minutes. Remove skin, separate flesh from bones, and flake with a fork. Yield: 5 cups flaked fish.

Carp Flake Puffs

2 cups cooked carp flakes.
2 cups raw white potatoes, sliced.
1 tablespoon butter or fortified margarine.
1 tablespoon flour.
1-1/2 cups milk
1 teaspoon salt.
1/4 teaspoon pepper.
1 tablespoon onion, grated.
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped.
3 eggs separated.

Steam potatoes in a small quantity of water, drain and mash. Make a cream sauce with butter, flour, and milk. Add fish flakes and potatoes, and cook for five minutes. Cool and add salt and pepper, onion, and parsley. Stir in the beaten egg yolks and beat well. Fold in the stiffly beaten egg whites and fill greased ramekins with mixture. Set ramekins in a shallow baking pan of water, and bake in a pre-heated oven for 35 minutes at 350° F. Or bake the carp puffs in a large, greased casserole for about 1 hour at 350° F.

Carp Flake Loaf

2 cups cooked carp flakes.
1 tablespoon lemon juice.
1/4 cup butter or other fat.
1/4 cup flour.
1 cup milk.
1/2 cup celery, finely chopped.
1/2 cup bread crumbs.
3/4 teaspoon salt.
1 tablespoon parsley, chopped.
1 teaspoon onion, grated.

Drain the fish flakes, and add the lemon juice. Melt the butter, stir in the flour and milk. Cook until smooth and thick, stirring constantly. Cool, and add all the other ingredients. Mix until well blended, pour on waxed paper and shape into a loaf. Place in a shallow, greased baking pan. Bake for about 45 minutes in a pre-heated oven at 350° F.

Scalloped Carp

2 to 2½ cups cooked carp flakes.
5 tablespoons butter or fortified margarine.
1 tablespoon onion, grated.
2 tablespoons green pepper, finely chopped.
2 tablespoons flour.
1 cup milk.
3/4 teaspoon salt.
1/2 teaspoon pepper.
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce.
1/3 cup American cheese, grated.
1/2 cup soft bread crumbs.

Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a skillet, add onion, and green pepper. Simmer until tender, stirring occasionally. Melt 2 tablespoons butter, blend with flour, add milk, and cook until thick, stirring constantly. Add the simmered green pepper, onion, and fat to the white sauce with the Worcestershire sauce. Place alternate layers of fish and white sauce mixture in a greased quart casserole, ramekins, or scallop shells. Top with cheese and crumbs combined. Bake for about 20 minutes in a pre-heated oven at 400° F. until crumbs are brown.

Tomato Aspic Carp Salad

1-1/2 cups carp flakes.
1/3 cup celery, cut fine.
2 tablespoons green pepper, diced.
1 package aspic gelatin.
2 cups tomato juice.

Dissolve gelatin in 1 cup of boiling tomato juice, and add 1 cup of cold tomato juice. Set in a cool place until gelatin begins to thicken. Stir the remaining ingredients into the gelatin and place mixture in a mold. Chill until firm, and serve with salad-greens and any desired dressing.

The following tomato-aspic gelatin recipe may be used instead of the prepared, packaged aspic gelatin and tomato juice.

2-1/2 cups stewed tomatoes
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 stalk celery, diced
Dash cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon unflavored gelatin
1/4 cup cold water
1 tablespoon vinegar

Combine first four ingredients, boil 10 minutes, and strain. Soak gelatin in cold water for 5 minutes, and add with vinegar to hot liquid.

Special Preparations of Carp

Preparation for cooking: If the carp has a soft texture and lacks satisfactory flavor, palatability may be improved by covering the dressed fish or fillets with the following mixture:

1 cup salt
1 large onion, ground or finely minced
2 tablespoons vinegar
1 teaspoon black pepper
1/8 teaspoon mace

Mix the ingredients thoroughly. Place fish in a deep dish, cover all surfaces with the mixture, and let stand for 1 hour. Rinse the fish thoroughly, and discard the mixture. Cook according to the preceding recipes.

CORNING CARP FOR TEMPORARY PRESERVATION

This is an easy method of preserving fish for a day or two. The fish should be filleted or dressed for baking. Wash, drain, and cover all surfaces (inside and out of dressed fish) with as much fine salt as will cling with careful handling. About 1/2 pound of salt to 5 pounds of fish should be used. Pack the fish in a deep vessel and store from 4 to 6 hours. The brine formed and any excess salt, should be rinsed from the fish. Wipe dry, and keep in a cool place until used.

One popular way of cooking corned carp is to cut the fish into portions for serving. Place in cold water, and heat to the simmering point. Drain off the water and repeat. Cook the fish until tender. Season with pepper and fat. Serve with steamed, unsalted potatoes.

Pickled Carp

3 pounds carp fillets
1 quart vinegar
1 quart water
1/3 cup salt
1 teaspoon ground white pepper
1/4 cup granulated sugar, or white corn syrup
1 teaspoon of whole mixed spices
1 large onion, sliced
1/2 cup of celery, coarsely cut

Tie the whole mixed spices in a piece of white cloth. Combine all the above ingredients except the carp, let come to a boil, and simmer for 20 minutes. Cut carp fillets into strips 3 inches long and 1/2-inch wide, and add them to the above liquid. Simmer for 15 minutes, and allow to cool in the pickling stock.

Carp sticks can be pickled so as to be suitable for serving as appetizers or as cold cuts.